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AUTH: HR 70

DATE 1-11-80 BY SP-6: EAST TENSION

10 July 1946

ENC BRISTING

1. Much of the calming effect of UN Secretary general Hammarskjöld's mission to the Middle East this spring has now disappeared. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] as well as troubled situations within both Jordan and Syria, have contributed to the nervous apprehension that presently grips all the Arab states, except perhaps Egypt. Only in Cairo, where the Nasser regime is still riding the crest of final British troop evacuation and the promulgation of a new constitution, does there seem to be any sense of a relatively unclouded future.

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2. The focal point of Middle East tension at the present is the Israel-Jordan border. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Hammarskjöld's mission last April. The latest ones (on 9 July) saw the [REDACTED]

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territory). They have also repeatedly called attention to Egypt's partial blockade of Israel bound shipping through Suez. Most ominously, they have again spoken of their freedom to take reprisals for frontier incidents, and have pointed to recent inflammatory statements by Jordanian leaders (including King Hussein).

3. Early this month, the UN truce team chief, General Barnes, became "frankly alarmed" at this Israeli attitude and went to Amman to warn King Hussein and his military chief to exercise extreme caution on the border. Barnes' warning had all the soothing effect of a delayed-action bomb--the Jordanians waited two days and then, shouting that they were about to be attacked, moved large troop reinforcements into West Jordan.

A. The Jordanians are now somewhat chastened over their alarm. Although they still insist they had intelligence (unconfirmed by any other source) of large-scale Israeli troop movements toward Jerusalem and other points, at the same time the Jordanians are trying to put the blame for their flap on Gen. Barnes.

B. What Jordanian intelligence may have received were reports of preparations for Israeli "draining maneuvers" now in progress, to which foreign attaches have been invited.

4. Whether Barnes set off the excitement, or whether the Jordanians generated it themselves, this flap is symptomatic of acute Arab nervousness, which stems as much from internal Arab state developments as from Israeli actions.

5. In Syria, the center of both the army chief of staff and the chief of military intelligence has given other Arabs a sense of something unusual developing. At the moment, an anti-leftist group now appears to be in control of the army. There is still a distinct possibility of further right-wing action or a coup from the left.

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MIDDLE EAST TENSION

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- II. Border situation is now calmer, but "flap" is symptomatic of present acute Arab nervousness. Other sources of alarm:
- A. Recent Syrian ouster of Army C of 3 and G-2. Army is now *officially* ~~apparently~~ under anti-leftist leadership, but possibly remains of further maneuvers by Syrian right or left (with Iraqi support probable for right, Egyptian support for left).
 - B. Furthermore, Iraqis are stockpiling near Syrian-Jordan frontier and have alerted mechanized units. Although Iraqi Army claims this is only to aid Jordan in event of Israeli attack, some Arabs envision Iraqi pressure on both Syria and Jordan in the event of unfavorable political turns.
- III. These developments point to new period of crisis in Middle East. Ultimate impact on relations with West is hard to foresee, but the immediate effect is an increase in mutual Arab and Israeli apprehensions.

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A. Iraq is probably supporting the rightist groups, while the Egyptians probably will throw their weight behind the more leftist elements.

B. Events in Iraq are another source of disquiet. The Iraqis are moving with unprecedented speed to stockpile military supplies at a convenient point near their border with Syria and Jordan.

A. The Iraqi army maintains that this supply move, as well as an alert apparently passed to Iraqi mechanized units, are only in fulfillment of Iraq's agreement to come to Jordan's assistance, should the latter be threatened by Israel.

B. However, rumors of these actions have encouraged an Arab belief that the Iraqis may intend to put forthright pressure on either Syria or Jordan or both, if political developments in those countries turn out unfavorably to Iraq.

7. All these developments, when added to the chronic problems of Arab-Israeli and inter-Arab relations, point to a new period of crisis in the Middle East. The ultimate impact of these events on Arab and Israeli relations with the West is difficult to foresee, but the prevailing confusion has the immediate effect of making the Arabs and Israelis eye each other even more apprehensively than they have in the past few months.